

News Release



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U.S. Labor Department's MSHA levies \$1.5 million fine against Aracoma mine operator *Operator charged with 25 contributory violations for fatal accident*

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today announced that it has fined the operator of the Aracoma Alma Mine No. 1 in Logan County, W.Va., where two miners perished in a fire on Jan. 19, 2006, \$1.5 million for contributory safety violations. The fine is the largest ever assessed by MSHA in a coal mine accident. MSHA's investigation team determined that 25 violations of mandatory health and safety laws contributed to the accident.

"The number and severity of safety violations at the mine at the time of the fire demonstrated reckless disregard for safety, warranting the highest fine MSHA has levied for a fatal coal mining accident," said Richard E. Stickler, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. "MSHA has referred this case to the U.S. Attorney's Office for possible criminal charges."

Stickler added: "We at MSHA extend our thoughts and prayers to the families for their losses, and we thank them for their patience as we worked to complete our investigation. We appreciate the cooperative working relationship we have had with the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training and the West Virginia Governor's Office, as represented by Davitt McAteer."

MSHA referred this case to the U.S. Attorney's Office for possible criminal charges in March 2006.

MSHA's investigation report is online at www.msha.gov.

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